



Analysing the EU's Migration-Development Nexus Through the Lens of Competing Policy Frames

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Abstract: The relationship between migration and development is a contentious subject and has generated diametrically opposed conceptualisations of its causal link. Some scholars regard migration primarily as a symptom and even aggravator of underdevelopment in the global South, while others instead tout the potential development benefits of migration. These wildly different views are reflected in the contradictory and at times empirically flawed paradigms that define the EU's discourse on the migration-development nexus. This article uses policy frames as its main conceptual tool to identify and analyse the two competing paradigms of the migration-development nexus in the EU's discourse. For this purpose, content analysis will be applied to the EU's agenda-setting documents from the years 2011 to 2020. The main finding is that the 2015 migration 'crisis' constitutes a significant turning point for the EU's framing of the migration and development relationship. It has prompted a shift of policymakers' focus from maximising the development potential of migrants towards addressing the root causes of migration flows to Europe through development aid. However, the present research shows that despite the diminished importance of the migration-for-development paradigm, some of the frame's key concepts, like the facilitation of remittances, have become constant features of the EU's migration governance and continue to influence policymaking.

Keywords: Migration, development, EU, policy frames, crisis

Introduction

Questions about the relationship between migration and development have generated fierce debate, extensive research but little consensus. In a world that is marked by dramatic differences of wealth and economic development between regions, countries and continents, migration has

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been interpreted as both the result of and a potential solution for such inequalities.² Faced with these complicated geo-political realities, EU policy-makers have increasingly sought to link migration and development policies in an attempt to create more comprehensive, long-term solutions.

The present article sets out to analyse the discourse on the migration and development nexus in the EU's external relations policy. For this purpose, policy frames will be employed as the main conceptual tool. This will be useful for understanding the migration-development linkage in the EU, since this policy field has experienced significant external shocks in recent years. The influx of migrant arrivals, particularly in 2015/16, has been commonly referred to as a 'migration crisis'.³ It should be noted that this characterisation is contentious among scholars; however, the common perception of the event as a crisis is relevant for this analysis.

Considering that even comparatively minor shocks have been shown to prompt the internal renegotiation of policy frames⁴, it is expected that the far-reaching consequences of the 2015 migration 'crisis' also manifest themselves in the shifts and changes of narratives within the EU's policy discourse. By applying qualitative content analysis methodology to agenda-setting policy documents, I will identify and map the defining policy frames in order to answer the following research question:

How (if at all) has the EU's discourse on the migration-development nexus changed in response to the 2015 migration 'crisis'?

When reviewing the existing literature on the migration-development nexus, the first important insight is that broadly speaking two separate, yet intersecting discourses exist: an academic and a policy discourse.⁵ In order to build a conceptual framework, I will first review the literature on the academic debate. I will outline different historical phases characterised by either migration optimism⁶ or migration pessimism⁷. This means that the link between migration and

² Robert E. B. Lucas, "Migration and economic development: an introduction and synopsis", in *International Handbook on Migration and Economic Development*, ed. Robert E. B. Lucas (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 1-8; Ronald Skeldon, *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997).

³ Anna Knoll, "The EU's Approach to African Migration During Crisis: Reinforcement and Changes", in *Migration Conundrums, Regional Integration and Development. Africa's Global Engagement: Perspectives from Emerging Countries*, ed. Inocent Moyo, Christopher Changwe Nshimbi and Jussi Laine (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

⁴ Sandra Lavenex and Rahel Kunz, "The Migration-Development Nexus in EU External Relations", *European Integration* 30, no. 3 (2008): 439-457.

⁵ Stephen Castles, "Development and Migration or Migration and Development: What Comes First?", *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 18, no. 4 (2009): 441-471.

⁶ Ninna Nyberg-Sørensen, Nicholas Van Hear and Poul Engberg-Pedersen, "The Migration-Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options", *International Migration* 40, no. 5 (2002): 49-71; Nicola Piper, "The Complex Interconnections of the Migration-Development Nexus", *Population, Space and Place* 15, no. 2 (2009): 93-101; Alan Gamlen, "The New Migration and Development Optimism: A Review of the 2009 Human Development Report", *Global Governance* 16, no. 3 (2010): 415-422; Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécoud, "Migration, development and the 'migration and development nexus'", *Population, Space and Place* 19, no. 4 (2013): 369-374.

⁷ see Hein de Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective", *International Migration Review* 44 (2010): 227-264; Hein de Haas, "The Migration and Development Pendulum: A Critical View on Research and Policy", *International Migration* 50, no. 3 (2012): 8-25; Thomas Faist, "Migrants as Transnational Development Agents:

development is either conceptualised as a positive relationship, i.e. more migration leads to more economic development, or as a negative relationship, i.e. increasing development abroad will effectively reduce migration⁸ (see Figure 1 and 2 for a schematic representation).

It is important to note that especially more recent scholarship has attempted to overcome this dichotomy by uncovering the more nuanced and complex ways in which migration and development are interlinked. However, the purpose of this article is not to research the actual connection between migration and development, but rather to analyse how the EU conceptualises the nexus and how this in turn informs its policies. I find that the EU's discourse is defined by two competing conceptualisations, which reflect (in a largely simplified form) the migration pessimism or migration optimism from the academic discourse. They give rise to two opposing policy approaches with different priorities, aims and strategies.⁹ To demonstrate this, I will review the literature on the "root causes approach"¹⁰, which unpacks and problematises the idea that development aid can be instrumentalised to drastically reduce migratory flows to the EU. Subsequently, I will trace the emergence of a positive migration-development nexus in EU policy¹¹ and describe how the corresponding "development policy approach" aims to harness the development potential of migrants but is in practice frequently secondary to the EU's security concerns¹².

Most of the literature analyses the EU's migration-development nexus through the lens of either a positive or a negative conceptualisation. Some scholars have pointed out the existence of two contradictory paradigms within the EU's migration-development policy field¹³; however, an analysis of these approaches over time has yet to be conducted. I suggest that we can fill this gap and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the EU's discourse on the migration-development nexus by framing and operationalising the root causes approach and the development approach as two competing policy frames. For this reason, the final section of the literature review

An Inquiry Into the Newest Round of the Migration-Development Nexus", *Population, Space and Place* 14, no. 1 (2008): 21-42; Thomas Faist and Margit Fauser, "The Migration-Development Nexus: Toward a Transnational Perspective", in *The Migration-Development Nexus – A Transnational Perspective*, ed. Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser and Peter Kivisto (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1-26.

⁸ de Haas, "The Migration and Development Pendulum", *op. cit.*

⁹ Ferruccio Pastore, "Europe, Migration and Development: Critical Remarks on an Emerging Policy Field", *Development* 50 (2007): 56-62.

¹⁰ Saskia Gent, "The Root Causes of Migration: Criticising the Approach and Finding a Way Forward", *Sussex Migration Working Paper* 11 (September 2002); Hein de Haas "Turning the Tide? Why 'Development Instead of Migration' Policies are Bound to Fail", *International Migration Institute Working Paper* 2 (2006); Marco Caselli, "'Let Us Help Them at Home': Policies and Misunderstandings on Migrant Flows Across the Mediterranean Border", *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 20, no. 4 (2019): 983-993; Susi Dennison, Shoshana Fine and Richard Gowan, "False Moves: Migration and Development Aid", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 2019.

¹¹ Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*; Elizabeth Collette, "The 'Global Approach to Migration': Rhetoric or Reality?", *European Policy Centre*, 2007; Natasja Reslow, "Migration and Development? An Assessment of Recent EU Initiatives", *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 6, no. 1 (2010): 3-21; Pastore, *op. cit.*

¹² Meng-Hsuan Chou, "EU and the Migration-Development Nexus: What Prospects for EU-Wide Policies?", *Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper* 37 (2006).

¹³ see for example Pastore, *op. cit.*; Knoll, *op. cit.*; Anna Knoll and Frauke de Weijer, "Understanding African and European Perspectives on Migration: Towards a Better Partnership for Regional Migration Governance?", *European Centre for Development Policy Management Discussion Paper* 203 (2016).

is dedicated to defining policy frames as conceptual tools for policy analysis and establishing their usefulness within a crisis context.¹⁴

Finally, in the empirical chapter, content analysis will be applied to key policy documents between 2011 and 2020 in an effort to map the evolution and relative emphasis of these competing policy frames over time. By contextualising and situating the findings within existing literature, this article will draw conclusions about the effects of the 2015 migration crisis on the EU's migration and development discourse.

1. The Migration-Development Relationship: A Conceptual Framework

1.1 *The Academic Debate*

Research into the mechanisms of migration-development interaction has historically swung back and forth between optimistic and pessimistic perspectives about the possible harm or benefit of emigration for the economic development of sending countries. The last two decades have seen a “renaissance in optimism”¹⁵, evidenced by a proliferation of research into the potential of migrants, diasporas and transnational communities to generate economic development in their countries of origin.¹⁶ The following section will outline the different phases of the debate, each characterised by either a positive or a negative framing of the relationship between migration and development. On this basis, it will then be argued that for a comprehensive analysis of migration and development linkages in the EU, it is necessary to go beyond the currently dominant positive conceptualisation.

1.1.1. *From Optimism to Pessimism and Back to Optimism*

The relationship between migration and development has been a subject of academic inquiry since the emergence of migration studies as an area of research.¹⁷ It has gone through different phases which tended to mirror the views of social and development theories that were contemporaneously dominant.¹⁸ The first major surge in interest took place in the 1960s and was underpinned by neo-classical and developmentalist assumptions. The idea was that in a free market environment, surplus labour from developing countries would fill the labour gaps in the

¹⁴ Martin Rein and Donald Schön, “Frame-Reflective Policy Discourse”, in *Social Sciences and Modern State National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads*, ed. Peter Wagner, Carol Hirschon Weiss, Björn Wittrock and Helmut Wollman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); David A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation”, *The American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 464-481; John Rawls, “Lecture 2: Power of citizens and their representation”, in *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

¹⁶ Faist, *op. cit.*; Faist and Fauser, *op. cit.*; Piper, *op. cit.*; Geiger and Pécoud, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Ronald Skeldon, “International Migration as a Tool in Development Policy: A passing Phase?”, *Population and Development Review* 34, no. 1 (2008): 1.

¹⁸ de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, *op. cit.*, p. 229; Faist, *op. cit.*

developed North, which would enable migrants to generate capital in the form of remittances and allow their countries of origin to enter a process of rapid modernisation following the stages of economic development, as proposed by Rostow¹⁹. The role of the return migrant in particular was seen as crucial for propelling industrialisation by bringing back “new ideas, knowledge, and entrepreneurial attitudes”²⁰. Based on these assumptions, the link between migration and development was conceptualised as a positive relationship, wherein more migration would naturally and necessarily lead to more development. For a schematic representation of the positive migration-development relationship, see Figure 1.

However, such unabashed optimism was not only followed by a sharp swing of the pendulum towards pessimism, but also by an apparent reversal of the proposed causal relationship between migration and development.²¹ In the 1970s and 1980s, the discourse on development was dominated by post-development theory, based on the seminal work of scholars such as Arturo Escobar²² and Immanuel Wallerstein²³. Rejecting the possibility of win-win development that would benefit both sending and receiving countries, migration was no longer perceived as a motor for economic development, but rather was seen as both a symptom and a potential aggravator of underdevelopment. This informed the perception of the migration-development relationship as a vicious circle: Underdevelopment would lead to migration, causing brain drain and increased dependency of developing countries in the process, while also aggravating the income gap between the global South and the global North, which in turn was expected to prompt even more emigration.²⁴ On this account, migration is often implicitly framed as an undesirable phenomenon, which needs to be reduced and mitigated, both for sending and receiving countries. Figure 2 displays a schematic graph of a negative migration-development relationship.

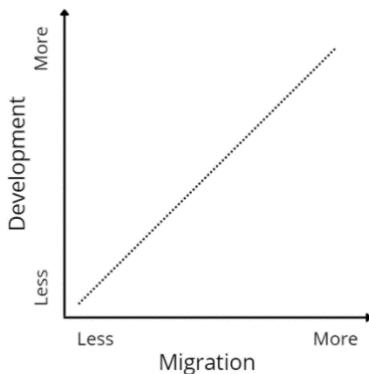


Figure 1: Positive relationship between migration and development

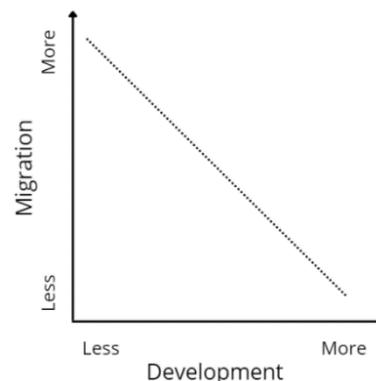


Figure 2: Negative relationship between migration and development

¹⁹ Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

²⁰ de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²¹ Faist, *op. cit.*

²² Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²³ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

²⁴ Castles, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

Finally, the contemporary paradigm, which emerged in the early 2000s, reversed this pessimist outlook and embraces once again a decidedly positive conceptualisation of the migration-development linkage.²⁵ According to Gamlen, this new “international policy orthodoxy”²⁶ is not exactly the same as the aforementioned 1960s neo-classical optimism, but rather represents a “Third Way between markets and states”.²⁷ In other words, on this account, migration, particularly circular and labour migration²⁸, has the potential to create a “win-win-win” situation, benefiting developing countries, receiving countries and migrants themselves²⁹, but only if it is well-managed. Additionally, the focus has shifted from return migrants to transnational networks and diaspora communities as the bringers of development.^{30 31}

To summarise, broadly speaking two opposing conceptualisations of the migration-development relationship exist within academia. The pessimistic or negative framing sees migration as a result of underdevelopment and, conversely, development cooperation and aid as a policy avenue for reducing migratory flows. The optimistic or positive framing, on the other hand, emphasises the potential of well-managed migration to improve development outcomes in sending countries, i.e. framing migration policies as tool for reducing underdevelopment abroad. Alongside them, there are also more nuanced approaches, which are less concerned with establishing an overarching link, but tend to instead focus on shedding light on specific aspects of the migration-development relationship and processes (e.g. new economics of labour migration ‘NELM’, migrant network theory, transnational theory).³² For the purposes of this paper, it will be sufficient to focus on the negative/positive nexus and how they inform EU policy.

1.1.2. *Moving Beyond the Positive Migration-Development Nexus*

The current dominance of the positive conceptualisation is reflected in the literature on the “migration-development nexus”. The coinage of this term itself is frequently attributed to a paper by Sørensen et al.³³, which explicitly only discusses the “*positive* dimensions and possibilities in the migration-development nexus”. While “nexus” implies the existence of complex linkages and interdependencies, there has been a clear emphasis within recent literature on researching the effects of migration on the development of sending countries, i.e. the positive conceptualisation of the link.³⁴

²⁵ Skeldon, *A Passing Phase*, *op. cit.*; Faist, *op. cit.*; Piper, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Gamlen, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

²⁸ Faist and Fauser, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Piper, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³⁰ Faist, *op. cit.*; de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, *op. cit.*; Castles, *op. cit.*

³¹ For a detailed review of the literature on economic, social and cultural effects of diaspora networks on development see Hillel Rapoport, “Migration and Development: The Diaspora Externality”, *Revue d'économie du développement* 1, no. 1 (2017): 31-61.

³² Castles, *op. cit.*, p. 447.

³³ Nyberg-Sørensen et al., *The Migration-Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³⁴ Nina Glick Schiller, “Migration and Development - Theorising Changing Conditions and Ongoing Silences”, in *Routledge Handbook of Migration and Development*, ed. Tanja Bastia and Ronald Skeldon (London: Routledge Handbooks Online, 2020).

This is potentially problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it lends support to Skeldon's³⁵ claim that resurgences of the migration-development debate often display a lack of familiarity with past framings and arguments.³⁶ Secondly, it is not conducive for the analysis of the linkage of migration and development in the EU's policy discourse to focus only on the positive dimension of the relationship. In fact, analysing the EU's policy discourse exclusively through the lens of a positive migration-development nexus risks obscuring the existence of different conceptualisations, which continue to influence EU policy.³⁷

Castles³⁸ observes that flawed assumptions about the migration-development relationship persist among politicians and decision-makers, even when they are challenged by scientific consensus. The existence of such glaring divergences suggests that the political and academic discourses about the migration-development nexus are fundamentally distinct, despite the fact that they tend to influence each other. According to Castles³⁹, this explains how notions of migration as a consequence of poverty and low development (and conversely the idea that development aid can be used to reduce migratory flows) are still influential in the contemporary policy debate, even though the academic debate has moved on from negative conceptualisations of the nexus.⁴⁰ In order to account for these divergences, it will therefore be necessary to go beyond the prevailing positive paradigm and employ a framework that can accommodate both the positive and the negative conceptualisations of the nexus, which co-exist, compete with and influence EU policy.

1.2 The EU Policy Debate

In the following section, I will make the case that the positive and the negative conceptualisation of the migration-development nexus have corresponding policy approaches which feature in the EU's policy discourse. I will outline some of the historical trends that gave rise to a migration-development policy field defined by competing and even contradictory paradigms.⁴¹ For this purpose, I will describe the root causes and the development policy approach and how they are underpinned by a positive or negative conceptualisation of the nexus respectively. Finally, I will argue that conceptualising these approaches as competing policy frames can provide a useful framework for analysing the EU's changing policy discourse.

1.2.1 Externalisation and Securitisation

Since the early stages of its external migration policy, the EU's response to migration has been defined by its restrictive nature, which stands in contrast to the abolition of the EU's internal

³⁵ Skeldon, *A Passing Phase*, *op. cit.*

³⁶ see also Glick Schiller, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Pastore, *op. cit.*

³⁸ Castles, *op. cit.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Geiger and Pécoud, *op. cit.*; Dennison et al., *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Pastore, *op. cit.*

borders.⁴² Starting in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, a temporary uptick in migration flows from Eastern Europe prompted the initial politicisation of migration issues, giving way to a cooperation between the EU and its member states that focused on restricting access to the EU's territory. This shift away from bilateralism to a common European approach to migration reflected not only the wish to deal with migration in a comprehensive manner, but also generated "an external projection of European migration policies, [which was] essentially driven by control and security logics and priorities".⁴³ In other words, the externalisation⁴⁴ and securitisation⁴⁵ of the EU's immigration agenda can be identified as two defining trends, which have influenced the conception of the migration and development policy field. Accordingly, policy measures that focused on strengthening external border controls, tightened visa requirements, and adopting stricter regulations for asylum applications and family reunifications were introduced.⁴⁶

1.2.2 *The Root Causes Approach*

The initial linking of migration and development policy was characterised by the overarching aim of controlling migration flows to Europe and the desire to "handle" migration outside of the Union's territory. The idea – which remains influential to this day – was that migration can be reduced by using development aid to address the underlying drivers of migration, such as poverty, conflict and a general lack of economic development in sending and transit countries. In the literature, this policy approach is usually referred to as "root causes approach"⁴⁷ or alternatively as "development instead of migration"⁴⁸ or "let us help them at home" policies⁴⁹.

This policy is firmly rooted in a negative conceptualisation of the migration-development nexus, i.e. the notion that migration is first and foremost an undesirable consequence of underdevelopment. It can also be understood as part of a more general attempt to integrate migration and asylum matters into the EU's external relations framework.⁵⁰ The root causes approach is therefore also frequently presented by policymakers as part of a "comprehensive"⁵¹ or "smart"⁵²

⁴² Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*; Franziska Zanker, "Managing or Restricting Movement? Diverging Approaches of African and European Migration Governance", *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019).

⁴³ Pastore, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Sandra Lavenex, "Shifting Up and Out: The Foreign Policy of European Immigration Control", *West European Politics* 29, no. 2 (2006): 329-350.

⁴⁵ Riina Isotalo, "Politicizing The Transnational: On Implications for Migrants, Refugees, and Scholarship", *Social Analysis* 53, no. 3 (2009): 60-84; Ninna Nyberg-Sørensen, "Revisiting the Migration-Development Nexus: From Social Networks and Remittances to Markets for Migration Control", *International Migration* 50, no. 3 (2012): 61-76; Chou, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*; Castles, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ Gent, *op. cit.*; Dennison et al., *op. cit.*; Pastore, *op. cit.*; Heliodoro Temprano Arroyo, *Using EU Aid to Address The Root Causes of Migration and Refugee Flows* (Florence: European University Institute, 2019).

⁴⁸ de Haas, *Turning the Tide?*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ Caselli, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰ Lavenex, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁵¹ Joanne Thorburn, "Root Causes Approaches to Forced Migration: Part of A Comprehensive Strategy? A European Perspective", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9, no. 2 (1996): 120; Gent, *op. cit.*

⁵² de Haas, *Turning the Tide?*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

solution to control and reduce migration. Corresponding policy measures include the diversion of development funding towards migration initiatives, capacity building, programmes to create job opportunities abroad, etc.⁵³

More critical voices have argued that the focus on “development at home” is just the extension of the EU’s securitisation and externalisation of migration issues. While policies that “address the root causes” appear more benevolent compared to overt control measures, the objective remains the same: to stop or at least drastically reduce international migration.⁵⁴ In this sense, addressing the root causes can be seen as merely a “pretext to justify security practices in the context of mobility”, which constitute “pre-emptive self-defence” on the part of the destination countries.⁵⁵

The rationale behind the root causes approach is, however, directly contradicted by empirical research findings. It has been shown that as a country’s level of economic development increases, migration does not subside, but the population’s mobility actually goes up. Particularly in the beginning of the industrialisation process, emigration movements usually intensify and thereby create a statistical phenomenon, which is called the “migration hump”.⁵⁶ This fact is so well-established that “it is now one of the few things that virtually all migration scholars agree with”.⁵⁷ For a recent empirical analysis that confirms the existence of the “migration hump”, see Berthiaume et al.⁵⁸

Despite this fundamental flaw and being difficult to operationalise⁵⁹, the root causes approach has continued to influence EU policymaking. It has even experienced a resurgence in relevance over the last couple years,⁶⁰ as will be shown in the empirical chapter.

1.2.3 The Development Approach

The combination of the aforementioned renaissance of migration optimism in the academic community, an increase of international discourse on the development potential of migrants, as well as a number of high-profile policy failures created the conditions in the 2000s for a second

⁵³ Maud Martens, Ilke Adam and Florian Trauner, “The Migration-Development Nexus in Selected African States: Is the Implementation of EU Migration Policies Development-Friendly?” in *Regional Integration and Migration Governance in the Global South*, ed. Glenn Raup, Ilse Ruysen and Katrin Marchand (Cham: Springer, 2020), 201-215.

⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Guengent, “Migrations internationales et développement : les nouveaux paradigmes”, *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 12, no. 2 (1996) : 117.

⁵⁵ Isotalo, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵⁶ Philip L. Martin and Taylor, J. Edward, “The Anatomy of a Migration Hump”, in *Development Strategy, Employment, and Migration: Insights from Models*, ed. J. Edward Taylor (Paris: OECD, Development Centre, 1996), quoted in de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Castles, *op. cit.*, p. 442.

⁵⁸ Nicolas Berthiaume et al., “A Reappraisal of the Migration-Development Nexus : Testing the Robustness of the Migration Transition Hypothesis”, *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 9518 (2021).

⁵⁹ Pastore, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Berthiaume et al., *op. cit.*, p. 2, Temprano Arroyo, *op. cit.*; Dennison et al., *op. cit.*

policy approach to emerge.⁶¹ In particular, when in 2005 more than a dozen migrants died while attempting to cross the Ceuta and Melilla border fence, the EU was directly confronted with the limits of an exclusively repressive approach to migration. Such developments sparked calls for policy change and were crucial for initiating what some have dubbed a “developmentalisation” of migration.⁶² Instead of seeing development cooperation and aid as a tool to control and restrict migratory flows, the focus now shifted to understanding and utilising the potential of migrants as promoters of development in their countries of origin.⁶³ The new paradigm therefore constituted a radical reversal of the prior conceptualisation of migration-development interactions.

The adoption of this new paradigm can be found in the EU’s 2005 “Global Approach to Migration”, which was heralded by the Council as “a balanced, global and coherent approach, covering policies to combat illegal immigration and, in cooperation with third countries, harnessing the benefits of legal migration”.⁶⁴ It was followed by an effort to integrate this positive link into the external relations aspect of the Union’s migration agenda. The EU consequently reaffirmed its intention to implement policy measures that would support development abroad by facilitating the transfer of migrant remittances and the creation of legal opportunities for circular and labour migration.

Despite this, many scholars have pointed out that the EU’s commitment to improving development through migration is superficial at best, since its development objectives are usually overshadowed by security concerns. There appears to be broad consensus within the literature that the EU’s aim to control and contain migration flows, as well as more recently, to prevent a second rendition of the 2015 migration ‘crisis’⁶⁵ remains paramount.⁶⁶

When reviewing the literature on the linkage of migration and development in the EU, I find that it is possible to distinguish between two paradigms, each giving rise to a different policy approach. Broadly speaking, the two approaches are underpinned by opposing conceptualisations of the connection between migration and development, that each stem from different phases of the academic debate. The root causes approach is based on the assumption that migration is primarily a symptom of low development in sending countries and that development cooperation is an effective tool for reducing migrant flows to Europe, thereby framing migration and development as a negative relationship. The development approach, on the other hand, is grounded in ‘migration optimism’, which is currently the dominant paradigm in academia (cf. section “The Academic Debate”). This approach frames migration and development as a positive

⁶¹ Pastore, *op. cit.*; Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*

⁶² Isotalo, *op. cit.*; Nyberg-Sørensen, *op. cit.*

⁶³ Castles, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴ European Council, “European Council Brussels 15 & 16 December 2005: Presidency Conclusions”, 2005. Also quoted in Collette, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Collette and Camille Le Coz, “After The Storm: Learning From the EU Response to the Migration Crisis”, *Migration Policy Institute*, 2018.

⁶⁶ Reslow, *op. cit.*; Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*; Chou, *op. cit.*; Zanker, *op. cit.*

relationship, where more migration and more mobility will generate more development in origin countries.

Finally, it is worth briefly discussing why there are two competing paradigms guiding the EU's actions on migration and development in the first place. One reason is simply that the root causes approach and the development approach originate in different policy fields that have developed different strategies and are guided by different ambitions. The root causes approach reflects the priorities of an externalised European migration policy, focused on controlling and ultimately reducing migrant flows to the Union. The development approach on the other hand aligns with development policy-makers, whose main objective is to promote economic development and stability in other countries. Pastore argues that these distinct origins and competing priorities are the reason why "[migration and development] policies in Europe are marked [...] by a certain strategic fuzziness, intrinsic political ambiguities, overlapping of competency including policy incoherencies".⁶⁷

1.3 Policy Frames As Tool for Policy Analysis

Having outlined the existing paradigms within the EU's policy discourse, I will now argue that we should conceptualise the two policy approaches as competing policy frames in order to analyse the shifting discourse surrounding the migration-development nexus. The following section will define policy frames and explain how they matter for policymaking. For this purpose, I am drawing on the detailed description of policy frames by Rein and Schön⁶⁸ and Boräng et al.⁶⁹, and their usage in EU policy analyses⁷⁰. Finally, I will operationalise the two frames, thereby laying the groundwork for the upcoming content analysis.

1.3.1 Defining Frames and Understanding Their Impact

Policy frames are essentially "packages of policy ideas".⁷¹ They are a way of selecting certain information (while omitting other facts), interpreting it and rendering it meaningful for a particular worldview.⁷² Frames can also be understood as the underlying, implicit structure made of empirical assumptions and value judgements that are "hidden" behind the explicit policy statements and actions. Perhaps most importantly, they constitute narratives or stories about policy issues that answer the questions "What is the problem?" and "How can the problem be

⁶⁷ Pastore, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁶⁸ Rein and Schön, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹ Frida Boräng et al., "Identifying Frames: A Comparison of Research Methods", *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 3, no. 2 (2014): 188-201.

⁷⁰ Knoll and de Weijer, *op. cit.*; Martens et al., *op. cit.*

⁷¹ Andrea Lenschow and Anthony R. Zito, "Blurring or Shifting of Policy Frames? Institutionalization of the Economic-Environmental Policy Linkage in the European Community", *Governance* 11, no. 4 (1998): 415.

⁷² Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm", *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993), quoted in Boräng et al., *op. cit.*

solved?”. In other words, policy frames provide the connective tissue between the explanation and the policy action, enabling the move from the descriptive to the prescriptive.⁷³

This allows frames to shape attitudes, influence the perception of particular events and impact what policy aims are pursued and through which strategies. They are consequently a powerful tool for policymaking⁷⁴ and this is especially true in moments of a perceived crisis. Events that are seen as threats to the established order are often also moments that lend themselves to the emergence of new narratives and the shifting of frames.⁷⁵ Such crises can therefore be understood as “framing contests”.⁷⁶ This is even true for comparatively minor external shocks. For example, Lavenex and Kunz have identified that the aforementioned violent events that ensued in 2005 in Ceuta and Melilla were “a major impulse for a reconsideration of the original policy frame within the EU”.⁷⁷ However, a similar analysis of the migration-development nexus has yet to be conducted with regard to the 2015 migration crisis.

Frames frequently coexist within the same institution or organisation⁷⁸, especially when they concern a heavily contested issue. In fact, Rawls⁷⁹ contends that the existence of different “reasonable views” in public policy discourse is a necessary feature of democratic pluralism. I therefore suggest that this is how we should understand the co-existence of the root causes approach and the development approach within the EU’s discourse on the migration-development nexus: as two competing interpretations of the same policy issue, which prescribe different actions and whose relative influence on policymaking is expected to be at least to some extent responsive to external factors.

1.4 The Case for Policy Frames

Upon reviewing the literature on the migration-development linkage within the EU, it is clear that most scholars have focused on analysing and critiquing one out of these two policy approaches. They have, for this purpose, employed either a positive⁸⁰ or a negative⁸¹ conceptualisation of the nexus. A significant decline of literature on the EU’s migration-development nexus can be observed after the year 2010, with most of the recent work focusing exclusively on the root causes approach.⁸² Some have already discussed the fragmented nature of the migration

⁷³ Rein and Schön, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ Boräng et al., *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ Knoll, *op. cit.*; Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶ Knoll, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

⁷⁷ Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

⁷⁸ Knoll and de Weijer, *op. cit.*

⁷⁹ Rawls, *op. cit.*, quoted in Rein and Schön, *op. cit.*;

⁸⁰ see Lavenex and Kunz, *op. cit.*; Nyberg-Sørensen et al., *The Migration–Development Nexus: Evidence and Policy Options*, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ see Alexandra Berger, “The Nexus between Migration and Development in EU External Action: No Quick Fix”, *Vrije Universiteit Brussel Institute for European Studies Policy Brief*, Issue 19/08 (2019).

⁸² Dennison et al., *op. cit.*; Temprano Arroyo, *op. cit.*

and development policy field⁸³ and identified the contradictory paradigms⁸⁴. However, a comprehensive analysis has yet to be conducted of both the negative and the positive conceptualisation of the nexus, the corresponding policy approaches and their relative emphasis within EU policy over time. This article aims to fill this gap. By analysing the EU's migration and development policy discourse between the years 2011 and 2020, I also seek to assess the effects of the 2015 migration 'crisis'.

Understanding the root causes approach and the development approach as distinct, competing policy frames will provide two advantages. Firstly, as the previous section showed, policy frames are well-suited for making sense of the different narratives that coexist in a policy field and their evolution within a crisis context.⁸⁵ Secondly, policy frames are useful for linking the interpretation of an issue (in this case, the conceptualisation of the migration-development relationship as either positive or negative) with corresponding policy objectives and prescriptions for concrete actions. This enables the deduction of variables and indicators, which can be identified in EU policy documents through content analysis methodology. The following section will describe this process in more detail.

1.4.1 Operationalising the Competing Policy Frames

In order to further define and operationalise the two policy frames, it will be necessary to assign variables and corresponding indicators that can be identified in EU policy documents.⁸⁶ Based on the previous description of policy frames, it is expected that the root causes approach and the development approach manifest their influence through descriptive claims that frame the link between migration and development as either a positive or a negative relationship, prescriptive claims about what the broad objective of policymaking in this field should be, and concrete policy measures that are the logical consequence of the descriptive and the prescriptive assertions.

It is therefore possible to create three variables: (1) interpretation of the migration-development link, (2) broad aims and strategies, and (3) concrete policy actions. For example, for the development policy frame, a broad aim would be to harness the development potential of migrants, and a possible strategy for this end could be to improve circular migration. Regarding the root causes frame, a corresponding interpretation of the nexus could be that in sending countries more development will lead to fewer migrants coming to Europe. Such concepts are understood as indicators that can be found in policy documents and used to identify, map and trace frames over time. For a non-exhaustive list of possible indicators, see Table 1 and 2.

Table 1: Root Causes Policy Frame

⁸³ Knoll, *op. cit.*; Knoll and de Weijer, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ Pastore, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵ Knoll, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ Wendy Olsen, "Operationalisation", in *Data Collection: Key Debates and Methods in Social Research* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012).

(1) Interpretation of the migration-development link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - negative, linear link, i.e. more development will lead to less migration - migration flows from the South to the North are symptoms of economic underdevelopment, insecurity and instability in developing countries - migration can be curbed by addressing underlying push-factors - development aid can be used to reduce migration pressure
(2) Broad aims and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve economic opportunities and security in sending (and sometimes transit) countries to reduce the number of migrants coming to Europe
(3) Concrete policy actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diversion of development funding towards origin countries - capacity building programmes - programmes to create economic opportunities in sending countries - encourage private and public investment in countries of origin - building resilience in origin and transit countries

Table 2: Development Policy Frame

(1) Interpretation of the migration-development link
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive link, i.e. more migration will lead to more development - migrants are actors/heroes of development - migration policies can be instrumentalised to improve development outcomes in sending countries - migration needs to be well-managed to achieve development objectives and create a “win-win-win” situation
(2) Broad aims and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - harness the development potential of migrants to improve economic development in countries of origin
(3) Concrete policy actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ethical recruitment schemes - facilitating and reducing the cost of remittances transfers - creation of legal migration channels

- visa facilitation agreements
- promoting diaspora engagement

2. Methodology

In the previous section, I reviewed the existing academic literature on the migration-development nexus and found that the role of the 2015 migration ‘crisis’ as a potential cause for a re-framing of this linkage in EU policy has not yet been sufficiently explored. In this section, I will briefly describe how I applied content analysis methodology to selected EU policy document as my primary research method.

2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis as Method

The empirical chapter of this project applies qualitative content analysis methodology to six major policy documents that were published between the years 2011 and 2020. When choosing which policy documents to analyse, I employed the following criteria: The documents needed to be global in their approach, i.e. not geographically limited to a specific country or region; they had to impact the EU’s governance of migration or development; and they had to fall within the specified time frame. The rationale behind only analysing global documents was that this would allow me to assess only the overarching, guiding principles of EU migration and development governance, largely independent from the particular interests of partner countries, destination and transit countries. Additionally, I chose to limit my analysis to publications by the European Commission in order to ensure the comparability of the documents.⁸⁷ Out of all the documents that fulfilled these criteria, I chose to analyse six that constituted important milestones for defining the EU’s agenda on migration and development. The full list can be found in Table 3.

Based on the literature review, I had already defined and operationalised two categories – the root causes and the development policy frames – which allowed me to use a deductive approach for my content analysis.⁸⁸ Accordingly, my first step was to generate more codes based on the overarching themes and concepts of each policy frame, so-called indicators. Subsequently, I read the selected policy documents thoroughly, highlighted and categorised all sections pertaining to the intersection of migration and development. Throughout this process, I continued to inductively revise and adapt my codes.

Table 3: List of policy documents used for content analysis

⁸⁷ With the exception of EUGS, which was drafted under the authority of High Representative Frederica Mogherini and adopted by the European Council.

⁸⁸ Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, “The Qualitative Content Analysis Process”, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62, no. 1 (2008): 107-115.

Full Name of Document	Abbreviation	Date
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility	GAMM	2011
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: A European Agenda on Migration	EAM	2015
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK on establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration	MPF	2016
“Shared Visions, Common Actions: A Stronger Europe”: A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy	EUGS	2016
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development: Our World, our Dignity, our Future	NECD	2016
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum	NPMA	2020

2.2 Limitations

While the six documents that were analysed constitute the major agenda-setting publications of the EU’s migration and development governance between the years 2011 to 2020 and are as such bound to guide any further communication that is issued by the Union on this topic, the depth, nuance and empirical strength of this paper could have been improved by including more primary sources, e.g. follow-up documents, implementation assessments, mobility partnerships, publications regarding the EU’s Trust Fund for Africa, etc. However, the limited scope of this

project made it necessary to focus on a small selection of only the most important publications. The upside of this choice, however, was that I was able to discuss each policy document in great depth in the empirical section of this paper.

Furthermore, engaging a second researcher to replicate the steps of the qualitative content analysis that were outlined above would have allowed me to test for intercoder reliability and thereby potentially improve the robustness of the inferred results. This was however, beyond the scope of this project.

3. Empirical Findings

3.1 Reporting Content Analysis Findings

The following empirical chapter will present the findings of the content analysis and contextualise them with relevant background information and insights from the academic literature. Keeping in mind the aforementioned research question, this section aims to go beyond comparing the frequency of each policy frame based on counting its associated concepts. The aim is instead to enable a deeper understanding of the nature and function of these frames within the analysed policy document that were put forward by the EU between 2011 and 2020. I will trace the relative prevalence of the root causes approach and the development approach over time and attempt to identify any changing priorities or concepts within the individual frames.

3.1.1 *The GAMM's Development Approach*

The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) strongly favours the development policy frame. It was launched in 2011 with the stated purpose of regulating the external migration affairs of all member states and thereby enabling the Union to “speak with one voice” on the issue of migration.⁸⁹ Compared to its predecessor, the 2005 Global Approach to Migration (GAM), this new strategic framework placed more emphasis on circular and labour mobility (e.g. facilitated through short-stay visas) and stressed the importance of migration for development.⁹⁰ In fact, “Maximising the development impact of migration and mobility” is named as one of the four pillars outlined in the GAMM and is given, at least rhetorically, the same weight as the fight against irregular migration and the protection of migrants and displaced persons.

When applying content analysis to identify the prevailing conceptualisation of the migration-development nexus in the GAMM, it is easily apparent that the overwhelming emphasis is on the positive linkage corresponding to the development policy frame. The root causes approach on

⁸⁹ James Hampshire, “Speaking With One Voice? The European Union's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility and the Limits of International Migration Cooperation”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016): 572.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the other hand is almost entirely absent from this document. This means that the concept of low development as a migration driver or the idea that irregular migratory flows could be reduced through successful development initiatives do not appear in the GAMM. To the extent that development cooperation in countries of origin and transit is mentioned at all, it is only in the context of supporting and protecting internally displaced persons. The implication is that improved economic development will create better living conditions for the vast majority of migrants that move to other developing countries. The key notion that such development cooperation can ultimately reduce migratory flows to Europe is not mentioned. Overall, the concepts associated with the root causes policy frame barely feature in the GAMM.

Instead, the GAMM exhibits a detailed conception of the positive migration-development nexus.⁹¹ This is not only apparent in the section on the development pillar, but also throughout the document. The key idea that migration can lead to improved development outcomes for sending countries is affirmed several times, e.g. “[g]ood governance of migration and mobility of third countries nationals can create value on a daily basis for the development of millions of people”.⁹² The need to mitigate brain drain, facilitate the transfer of remittances and engage diaspora communities in development initiatives should be highlighted as the most important recurring key concepts. However, the concrete measures that were formulated for achieving these ends are not binding and largely up to the member states to implement⁹³, which detracts from the EU’s stated commitment to development cooperation.

The GAMM additionally affirms the importance of circular mobility and encourages the monitoring of “bona fide recruiters”⁹⁴, as well as improved portability of social rights as a potential “facilitator for mobility and circular migration”⁹⁵. The creation of legal migration opportunities is, however, almost exclusively addressed in the context of serving the EU’s labour market needs.⁹⁶

Perhaps the most interesting finding is that cooperation of partner countries on border management and combatting irregular migration is framed as a prerequisite for the creation of legal migration opportunities. This is especially interesting and potentially revealing, since the document also acknowledges that a lack of legal migration opportunities can be a factor in driving people to seek out illegal channels. Considering that the GAMM stresses several times the necessity of orderly movement to realise the development potential of migration, the conditionality attached to the creation of legal migration routes is indicative of a subordination of development objectives to security concerns.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Knoll and de Weijer, *op. cit.*

⁹² European Commission, COM(2011)743, p. 5.

⁹³ Tineke Strik, “The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility”, *International Law: Open Issue* 5 no. 2 (2017): 321.

⁹⁴ European Commission, COM (2011)743, p. 4.

⁹⁵ European Commission, COM (2011)743, p. 7.

⁹⁶ see also Strik, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ Hampshire, *op. cit.*

Overall, out of the documents that were analysed, the GAMM most strongly commits to the development approach, framing the migration-development nexus almost exclusively as a positive link. This rhetorically strong stance is, however, somewhat undermined by the EU's non-binding proposals and the conditionality attached to development cooperation. It will become apparent over the course of this analysis that even within the development frame, the EU clearly prefers policy measures that do not directly increase the number of migrant arrivals. The GAMM also displays this tendency through its focus on remittance transfers and diaspora engagement over the creation of legal migratory routes.

3.1.2 *Responding to a Crisis*

Following the analysis of the GAMM, this next section will discuss how the EU's framing of migration and development issues shifted in response to the 2015 migration 'crisis'. Compared to the GAMM's decidedly positive, "migration-for-development" framing, it is perhaps surprising that less than five years later the EU's next major policy document on migration completely reverses course on the Union's understanding of the migration-development nexus. In fact, "one of the cardinal objectives"⁹⁸ of the 2015 European Agenda on Migration (EAM) is addressing the root causes of irregular migration through development cooperation. While the EAM mirrors the GAMM's four-pillar structure and repeats some of its key ideas, it is exemplary of a clear departure from the EU's migration optimism. Instead, "reducing the incentives for irregular migration"⁹⁹ has become a priority.

However, this shift is perhaps less surprising when understood as part of the EU's response to what is now known as the 2015-16 migration 'crisis'. The EAM was issued in 2015 with the aim of formulating a common European response to the influx of more than one million refugees¹⁰⁰, providing tools, a strategy and funding to tackle the associated political and humanitarian challenges. By applying content analysis to this document as well as to the corresponding 2016 Migration Partnership Framework (MPF), it is possible to demonstrate that the migration 'crisis' constitutes a turning point in the EU's discourse on the migration-development nexus.

This analysis finds that the need to address "root causes" of migration is mentioned eight and thirteen times respectively in the EAM and the MPF. Such causes are primarily identified to be poverty, unemployment and a general lack of economic opportunities in sending countries, as well as insecurity caused by conflict and civil war. Additionally, the EU's ambition to tackle migration "upstream" in cooperation with third countries is framed as a long-term and mutually beneficial engagement: "it is in the interests of all to address the root causes which cause people

⁹⁸ Daria Davitti and Annamaria La Chimia, "A Lesser Evil? The European Agenda on Migration and the Use of Aid Funding for Migration Control", *UCD Working Papers in Law, Criminology & Socio-Legal Studies Research Paper 07/17* (2017): 1.

⁹⁹ European Commission, COM(2015)240, p. 7 (pillar 1).

¹⁰⁰ Fabian Willermain, "The European Agenda on Migration, One Year On: The EU Response to the Crisis Has Produced Some Results, but Will Hardly Pass Another Solidarity Test", *EGMONT: The Royal Institute of International Relations*, 2016.

to seek a life elsewhere”.¹⁰¹ The EU does not shy away from proposing concrete ways of implementing such a cooperation either. Notable examples are the diversion of additional development funding towards countries of origin and the creation of an External Investment Fund.

Despite the importance of the root causes approach, the development policy frame does feature in the EAM under the “Legal Migration” pillar too, although its importance is significantly diminished compared to the GAMM. In this section, the EAM reaffirms the development potential of migrants as well as the EU’s commitment to facilitate the transfer of remittances. The EU states its intention to “actively support migration-related targets [...] and to emphasise the importance of harnessing the positive effects of migration [...] for the post-2015 development agenda”.¹⁰²

The development approach is, however, not only significantly less prevalent in this document, but its framing has shifted too. The EAM suggests that “encouraging South-South mobility can bring an important contribution to local development”.¹⁰³ It is therefore implied that the development benefits of migration can also be harnessed by increasing regional mobility, making onward migration to Europe not necessary to achieve development objectives. Additionally, the creation of legal migration pathways – a key element of the development approach – is increasingly framed as just another way of reducing the number of irregular arrivals to the EU.

It should be highlighted that both the EAM and the MPF further develop and promote the kind of aid conditionality that was already present in the GAMM. The “more-for-more” approach suggests using development funding as reward for third countries’ cooperation in migration management: “Standing ready to provide greater support to those partner countries which make the greatest efforts, but without shying away from negative incentives, EU assistance and policies should be tailored to produce concrete results in stemming the flow of irregular migrants”.¹⁰⁴ The implication is clear: development cooperation is a tool in the EU’s external relations toolbox that can be leveraged with the overarching aim of reducing migratory flows to Europe.¹⁰⁵

The key takeaway from the analysis of the EAM and the MPF is that in response to the migrant ‘crisis’, the need to drastically reduce the number of migrants coming to Europe has risen to the top of the EU’s political agenda. This has also affected the discussion surrounding the migration-development nexus, as the framing has decidedly shifted to the root causes approach. The EU continues to allude at several points to the development benefits of migration, but considers how this can be achieved without further increasing the migratory pressure on European countries.

3.1.3 Migration in the EU’s Development Agenda

¹⁰¹ European Commission, COM(2015)240, p. 7.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁴ European Commission, COM(2016)385, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Davitti, and La Chimia, *op. cit.*

Having thus far looked at policy documents on the EU's migration governance, the paper will next apply content analysis to the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) and the 2017 New European Consensus on Development (NECD). The aim is to determine how the migration-development nexus is discussed in the EU's external relation and development agenda and which policy frames are the most prevalent.

There is no doubt that considerations regarding the migration crisis heavily influenced both documents. Both the EUGS and the NECD reference and problematise migration more frequently than previous documents on the EU's foreign policy and development cooperation.¹⁰⁶ Since the EUGS is presented as the overarching framework for the Union's external action¹⁰⁷, it provides valuable context for the NECD and its discussion of migration and development will be analysed first.

The rise of migration to the top of the EU's agenda and its externalisation is also reflected in the EUGS. While previous strategic documents did not treat the topic as a priority¹⁰⁸, the EU Global Strategy mentions migration 26 times throughout its 60 pages. Despite this reinforced focus, the connection between migration and development remains rather underdeveloped. The idea that migration could lead to economic development in sending countries does not feature at all, and while I was able to identify one key concept from the development policy approach – namely the need to create legal migration pathways – this was, as in the MPF, framed as a way to reduce irregular migration, rather than an opportunity to generate development benefits.

On the other hand, the EUGS makes several references to the idea that development assistance (usually combined with a number of other foreign policy tools) can effectively address the long-term drivers and root causes of irregular migration. It also introduces the concept of “resilience, which, in the context of migration, is defined as a country's capacity to “enable migrants and refugees to stay close to home and avoid taking dangerous journeys”.¹⁰⁹ Building resilience therefore implies addressing the structural drivers of migration in countries of origin and transit and thus corresponds to the root causes policy frame. All in all, while the EUGS employs several competing narratives of migration¹¹⁰, the link between migration and development is exclusively framed as a negative relationship.

Thus far, it appears that the migration crisis has sparked (or rather reignited) the EU's sustained interest in eliminating the drivers of migration through development cooperation. This has the added effect of largely side-lining the Union's past ambition to harness the development benefits of migrants, as proposed in the GAMM in 2011. Such a prioritisation of migration reduction

¹⁰⁶ Raphaëlle Faure and Simon Maxwell, “The Proposed New European Consensus on Development: Has the European Commission Got It Right?” *Overseas Development Institute*, 2017; Michaela Ceccorulli and Sonia Lucarelli “Migration and the EU Global Strategy: Narratives and Dilemmas”, *The International Spectator* 52, no. 3 (2017): 83-102.

¹⁰⁷ Faure and Maxwell, *op. cit.*; Thomas Henökl and Niels Keijzer, “The Future of the European Consensus on Development”, *Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) Briefing Paper* 5/2016 (2016).

¹⁰⁸ Ceccorulli and Lucarelli, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

objectives pervades even the New European Consensus on Development. Migration plays a significant role in the NECD, being mentioned 30 times, and is almost exclusively framed as a symptom of underdevelopment rather than an opportunity for development.¹¹¹

However, the development policy frame is not entirely absent from this document. The NECD evokes the “transformative potential” and the ability of well-managed migration to create a win-win-win situation for migrants, host and sending countries. The need to manage migration well is emphasised, alongside a renewed commitment to facilitate the transfer of remittances. Compared to the GAMM’s conception of a positive migration-development nexus, however, the link is still rather weak.

This is especially true when compared to the root causes policy frame, which is significantly more prevalent in the NECD. Development cooperation is presented as a sustained response to migratory pressures and a way to “build long-term resilience”, which will allow potential migrants to remain in their home countries. Additionally, the idea that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as set out by the United Nations 2030 Agenda will also necessarily tackle the root causes of migration is implied throughout the document. This also means that the empirically problematic assumption that economic development in sending countries can reliably reduce migration to the EU continues to underpin the NECD’s understanding of the migration-development nexus.

This analysis has shown that migration reduction objectives continue to dominate, even in policy documents that do not directly concern migration, but instead lay out the Union’s more general extern relations or development cooperation agenda. Especially the NECD’s framing of migration as primarily a symptom of underdevelopment should be seen as indicative for the development approach’s loss of influence on policymaking, which has not recovered since the end of the immediate migration ‘crisis’. The next section will explore if this can be expected to change in the future, by analysing the latest EU policy document on the governance of migration, the 2020 New Pact on Migration and Asylum (NPMA).

3.1.4 *The Future of the Migration-Development Nexus in the EU*

In 2019, the global context differed significantly from 2015. The number of unauthorised crossings of the EU border was recorded as only 142,000, compared to 1.82 million irregular arrivals at the height of the European migration ‘crisis’.¹¹² The former emergency situation has mostly subsided, and the public discourse has shifted to new topics, notably the COVID-19 pandemic. However, migration issues continue to loom large in the EU’s negotiation with its partner countries. Previous frameworks and the MPF in particular have been blamed for undermining the EU’s commitment to established development principles, while at the same time producing little

¹¹¹ Faure and Maxwell, *op. cit.*

¹¹² European Commission, COM(2020)609.

progress in attaining migration management objectives.¹¹³ The European Commission's 2020 proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum (NPMA) promises to contend with some of these issues and to provide a "fresh start" and a "sustainable solution on migration"¹¹⁴, which will guide the Union's treatment of migration issues for the coming years.

Regarding the framing of the migration-development nexus, however, this latest document continues the EU's familiar prioritisation of migration control and reduction objectives.¹¹⁵ While there is some mention of the potential "positive impacts" and "mutual benefits" of migration, the Pact asserts that such a win-win-win cooperation can only be realised within a well-managed partnership. Besides this, the NPMA also reaffirms the importance of harnessing the development benefits of remittances and makes a commitment to reducing transfer costs. Similar to the MPF and the EUGS, the need to create legal migration pathways is only framed as a means to protect displaced persons and "attract talent to the EU", instead of an opportunity to stimulate development.

The root causes frame, however, plays a significant role in the Pact. A recurring key concept is the creation of "economic opportunity" in sending countries to counteract migratory pressure. Additionally, addressing root causes like underdevelopment, environmental degradation and political instability are considered to be in the interest of "the EU and its citizens, partner countries, migrants and refugees themselves"¹¹⁶, thereby mirroring the "win-win-win" concept of the development frame. The Pact also proposes the diversion of funding towards countries with a "significant migration dimension" – a move that had been criticised in the past for undermining development principles.¹¹⁷ In general, the Pact tones down its rhetoric on aid conditionality, but fundamentally the EU's linking of migration and development does not differ significantly from the policy documents that were conceived in response to the crisis.

All in all, the root causes policy approach has remained the dominant framing of the migration-development nexus in the EU's policy agenda since the 2015 'crisis' and the NPMA gives no indication that this is about to change in the coming years.

Conclusion

After presenting the findings of the content analysis, this final section will provide a discussion and synthesis of the results. I aim to answer the research question by drawing conclusions from

¹¹³ Clare Castillejo, "EU Engagement with Africa on Migration: A Change of Approach Required", *Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) Briefing Paper* 9/2018 (2018).

¹¹⁴ Ursula von der Leyen, "Press statement by President von der Leyen on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum", 23 September 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_1727, accessed 17 March 2021.

¹¹⁵ Eleni Karageorgiou, "The New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Why Pragmatism Cannot Engender Solidarity", *Nordic Journal of European Law* 3, no. 2 (2020).

¹¹⁶ European Commission, COM(2020)609.

¹¹⁷ Castillejo, *op. cit.*; Berger, *op. cit.*

my findings about the effects of the 2015 migration ‘crisis’ on the EU’s migration and development discourse. Additionally, I will also outline potential avenues for future research.

In 2008, Ronald Skeldon asked whether the framing of migration as a tool for international development was likely to be of sustained importance or just “a passing phase in development thinking”.¹¹⁸ Considering that the EU’s initial approach to the intersection of migration and development utilises the root causes policy frame and the fact that its post-crisis handling of this issue reverts back to the ideas that were dominant in the 1990s and early 2000s, should we view the optimistic development policy frame as just an inconsequential blip in the EU’s governance of the migration-development nexus? With the benefit of hindsight and based on the results of the content analysis, it is possible to answer this question and draw conclusions about the evolution of the development frame in the EU’s policy discourse.

As was previously established, crises and external shocks create the conditions for a renegotiation of policy frames and provoke at times significant shifts in policy positions. This observation aligns with my empirical findings: the most dramatic change within the 2011–2020 time period in the EU’s discourse on the migration-development nexus occurred in response to the 2015 migration ‘crisis’. While maximising the development benefits of migration constitutes one of the key ambitions of the 2011 GAMM, this positive framing barely features in the 2015 EAM or the corresponding 2016 MPF. Instead, the EU has decidedly returned to the root causes policy frame, viewing migration primarily as a symptom of underdevelopment and development cooperation as a potential remedy. My findings also show that the dominance of the root causes frame in the EU policy discourse has persisted to this day, even as the original crisis context has largely disappeared.

Based on these results, it is possible to conclude that the migration ‘crisis’ has provoked a significant and lasting shift in the EU’s discourse on migration and development. Does this mean that migration-for-development was just a passing phase? The importance of the development policy frame has been considerably diminished since the crisis, which appears to confirm this idea. Even the NECD, which primarily aims to achieve “sustainable development and poverty eradication”¹¹⁹, clearly prioritises the root causes policy frame.

Furthermore, there is reason to question more generally the impact of the development policy frame. As can be seen throughout the “Empirical Findings” section, the EU has a persistent tendency to use development funding as a ‘carrot and a stick’ to incentivise partner countries’ participation in attaining migration management objectives.¹²⁰ Such a conditionality seems to be a favourite tool, regardless of whether the migration-development link is framed as a positive or a negative relationship. It suggests that at least in the policy documents that were analysed for this article, development objectives have always ranked lower than the need to control and

¹¹⁸ Skeldon, *A Passing Phase*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ European Commission, COM(2016)385, p. 3.

¹²⁰ Berger, *op. cit.*

externalise migration, even when the EU primarily employed the development policy frame. Naturally, this raises the question whether ‘harnessing the development potential of migration’ was ever a serious or even feasible policy commitment to begin with.

However, the discursive shift that occurred in response to the migration ‘crisis’ did not result in a complete discarding of the development policy frame. A few key concepts have continued to influence EU policymaking. For example, the development potential of remittances and the EU’s commitment to reduce transfer costs have been a constant feature of the Union’s discourse on migration and development matters. Combined with, most recently, the NPMA’s acknowledgment that migration can have positive effects on sending and host countries, it seems that the insights of a positive migration-development nexus have not been entirely forgotten and are poised to continue to influence EU policymaking in the future.

Future research into the migration-development nexus should therefore bear in mind the continued existence of both paradigms within the EU’s discourse. Furthermore, examining the effects of the EU’s discursive shift towards a root causes policy frame on its negotiation process and ability to create mutually beneficial partnerships with origin and transit countries is a possible research avenue that has the potential to produce interesting and valuable insights.

In conclusion, my research has aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the migration and development linkage in the EU’s discourse between the years 2011 and 2020 by employing the lens of competing policy frames. I found that the 2015 migration ‘crisis’ constitutes a turning point for the EU’s discourse on the migration-development nexus, prompting a lasting shift from the development to the root causes policy frame. Despite this discursive shift, some key concepts of the development frame continue to influence EU policymaking. Therefore, it will be useful for future research to consider the continued impact of a positive migration-development nexus on the EU’s discourse.

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